

Grant Gives Rural Schools New Equipment, Teaches Children to Play

Issue

Decades ago, children played in the neighborhood with friends until their mothers called them home for dinner. Today, children come home from school and watch television, play video games, and play on the computer. Children do not have the outdoor play experiences that were second nature to their parents. This statement is echoed by the recent comment from Tiffany Agree, after-school coordinator and training manager for Communities and Schools of Johns Island, “Children just don’t know how to play these days.” According to industry guidelines, children and adolescents need 60 minutes of physical activity each day. The Student Health and Fitness Act of 2005 is intended to provide students with at least 30 minutes of physical activity within the school day, which still leaves a noticeable gap for the recommended amount of daily activity.

According to a new report by Trust for America's Health, South Carolina has the fifth highest rate of adult obesity, 27.8 percent, and the seventh highest rate of overweight youth ages 10-17, 8.9 percent, in the nation. S.C. Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC) research has shown that lifestyle behaviors learned young continue through the life span. Because adolescents engaged in physical activity delay risk-taking behaviors, early intervention is key.

Intervention

The major emphasis for DHEC Region 7’s Community Health Education School and Youth program is addressing the health burden that physical inactivity has on obesity. The program’s major aim is to decrease the incidence of obesity and obesity-related diseases by helping children learn healthy lifestyle choices. DHEC Region 7 developed a Nutrition and Physical Activity Toolkit and Training to support increased opportunities for children to be physically active.

DHEC Region 7 provided Nutrition and the Physical Activity Toolkit Training to after-school coordinators for the Community In Schools of Johns Island Program through Preventive Health and Health Services Block Grant funding, with additional funding provided by a General Mills Champion Grant. The training reviewed curriculum and physical activity options. The physical activity component included:

- Instruction on basic playground games;
- How to promote teamwork and other life skills children will use every day; and
- Toolkits, comprised of a Kids Club Manual, Kids Club Activity Box and activity bags filled with kick balls, soccer balls and double-dutch jump ropes.

Impact

In the 2007 school year, DHEC Region 7’s partnership with Community In Schools of Johns Island impacted a total of 100 children at Mt. Zion, Fierson, Murray LaSeine and James Island Elementary Schools, as a result of this Nutrition and Physical Activity Toolkit Training. Plans for next year are underway and are aimed to increase the number of children impacted, thus improving their ability to play and achieve lifelong physical activity benefits.

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